



Feinstein Amendment Calls on Department of Defense to Develop Perchlorate Contamination Clean-Up Plan

June 18, 2004

-- Amendment accepted into DOD Authorization Bill --

Washington, DC – The United States Senate last night approved an amendment to the Department of Defense Authorization bill, which was sponsored by Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.), calling on the Department of Defense to remediate perchlorate contamination on DOD sites where the chemical threatens health and safety of Americans.

Perchlorate, a propellant used in munitions and jet fuels, has contaminated drinking water supplies or the environment in 34 States. If ingested, perchlorate can interfere with thyroid function, and scientific evidence suggests that this effect can impair the normal development of the brain in the fetuses and newborn, and permanently damage cognitive abilities and brain function in affected children.

“Perchlorate contamination poses a major threat to the health of Californians and all Americans,” Senator Feinstein said. **“It is imperative that the Department of Defense disclose all evidence of perchlorate contamination at DOD sites, and begin cleaning it up as soon as possible.”**

The amendment expresses the sense of the Senate that:

- Perchlorate has been identified as a contaminant of drinking water sources or in the environment in 34 States and has been used or manufactured in 44 States.
- Perchlorate exposure at or above a certain level may adversely affect public health, particularly the health of vulnerable and sensitive populations.
- The Department of Defense should:
 - Continue remediation the Department has begun already;
 - Continue evaluating and prioritizing sites for clean up without waiting for the establishment of a Federal standard; and
 - Develop a plan to remediate perchlorate contamination resulting from the Department’s activities to ensure it is ready to act once a drinking water standard is established.

“Perchlorate contamination is a national problem, and its scope is enormous,” Senator Feinstein said. **“I am hopeful that with the approval of this sense of Senate language, the**

Department of Defense will understand that we expect much more cooperation than we have received previously.”

Here is the scope of the threat to drinking water supplies:

- In April 2003, perchlorate contamination was documented in 25 States. One year later, significant perchlorate contamination has been found in 34 States.
- This contamination is particularly serious in the State of California. At least 329 groundwater wells operated by 84 different local water agencies in California have perchlorate contamination. These include wells in eastern Sacramento County, Simi Valley, San Gabriel Valley, the Rialto-Colton Basin, water sources for the Santa Clara Valley Water District, and in the Colorado River, which supplies water to Southern California. Collectively, these agencies serve more than half of the State’s population.
- In the Inland Empire, a seven mile plume was discovered in 2002, which has contaminated 22 drinking water wells in western San Bernardino County, jeopardizing water supplies for 500,000 local residents.

And, the problems are not limited to drinking water.

- Preliminary surveys of produce grown in Southern California and Arizona suggest that perchlorate becomes concentrated in fruits and vegetables that rely on irrigation water from the Colorado River, as well as dairy products. This productive farming area grows much of the Nation’s produce, including about 90 percent of the winter lettuce crop.
- This contamination has been traced up the Colorado River to Nevada. Between 1951 and 1962, the U.S. Navy owned and contracted for the operation of the largest perchlorate production facility in the country, located in Henderson, Nevada. Even after relinquishing its ownership of the facility, the Department and its contractors continued to be the primary customers of perchlorate produced in Henderson at the Kerr-McGee site.

Currently, there is no National standard to measure perchlorate contamination in drinking water supplies.

- On March 11, 2004, the State of California set a public health goal for the level perchlorate, in drinking water supplies at 6 parts of perchlorate per billion parts of water.
- The National Academy of Sciences is conducting an assessment of the state of science regarding the effects on human health of perchlorate ingestion that will aid in understanding of the effect of perchlorate exposure on sensitive populations. This study is due to be completed later this year.
- Following the issuance of the NAS study, the Environmental Protection Agency will issue a national standard for the level of perchlorate in drinking waters supplies.

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